

**JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION**

**ON**

**DROPOUT PREVENTION**

**AND**

**HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION**



**INTERIM REPORT TO THE  
2009 GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

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TELEPHONE: (919) 733-9390

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# STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA



## JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON DROPOUT PREVENTION AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

January 21, 2009

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 2009 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Attached for your consideration is the interim report to the 2009 General Assembly. This report was prepared by the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation pursuant to Session Law 2007-323, Sec. 7.32(f) of the 2007 General Assembly, as amended by S.L. 2008-181, Part XXXV.

Respectfully submitted,

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Representative Earline Parmon, Chair

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Senator Vernon Malone, Chair

***North Carolina General Assembly***  
***Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and***  
***High School Graduation***

S.L. 2007-323, sec. 7.32.(f)

***Pro Tem's Appointments***

Sen. Vernon Malone North Carolina Senate 300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 314 Raleigh, NC 27603-5925 (919) 733-5880	Co-Chair
--	----------

Sen. Julia Catherine Boseman North Carolina Senate 300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 309 Raleigh, NC 27603-5925 (919) 715-2525	Member
--	--------

Sen. Charlie Smith Dannelly North Carolina Senate 16 W. Jones Street, Room 2010 Raleigh, NC 27601-2808 (919) 733-5955	Member
---	--------

Sen. Katie G. Dorsett North Carolina Senate 16 W. Jones Street, Room 2106 Raleigh, NC 27601-2808 (919) 715-3042	Member
---	--------

Sen. Samuel Clark Jenkins North Carolina Senate 300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 308 Raleigh, NC 27603-5925 (919) 715-3040	Member
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Sen. Joe Sam Queen North Carolina Senate 16 W. Jones Street, Room 1117 Raleigh, NC 27601-2808 (919) 733-3460	Member
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***Speaker's Appointments***

Rep. Earline W. Parmon North Carolina House of Representatives 300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 632 Raleigh, NC 27603-5925 (919) 733-5829	Co-Chair
--	----------

Rep. Dan Blue North Carolina House of Representatives 16 W. Jones Street, Room 2207 Raleigh, NC 27601-1096 (919) 733-5752	Member
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Rep. Angela R. Bryant North Carolina House of Representatives 300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 542 Raleigh, NC 27603-5925 (919) 733-5878	Member
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Rep. William A. Current, Sr. North Carolina House of Representatives 300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 418-A Raleigh, NC 27603-5925 (919) 733-5809	Member
--	--------

Rep. Susan C. Fisher North Carolina House of Representatives 300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 420 Raleigh, NC 27603-5925 (919) 715-2013	Member
--	--------

Rep. Bryan R. Holloway North Carolina House of Representatives 300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 502 Raleigh, NC 27603-5925 (919) 733-5609	Member
--	--------

## ***Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation***

Sen. Albin B. Swindell IV  
North Carolina Senate  
300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 629  
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925  
(919) 733-3030

Member

Rep. Pat B. Hurley  
North Carolina House of Representatives  
300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 607  
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925  
(919) 733-5865

Member

Sen. Jerry W. Tillman  
North Carolina Senate  
300 N. Salisbury Street, Room 628  
Raleigh, NC 27603-5925  
(919) 733-5870

Member

Rep. Cullie M. Tarleton  
North Carolina House of Representatives  
16 W. Jones Street, Room 2221  
Raleigh, NC 27601-1096  
(919) 733-7727

Member

### ***Staff to Commission***

Dee Atkinson, Research Division  
Drupti Chauhan, Research Division  
Shirley Iorio, Research Division  
Sara Kamprath, Research Division  
Kara McCraw, Research Division  
(919) 733-2578

Pat Christmas, Commission Assistant  
Bonnie McNeil, Commission Assistant

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## Authorizing Legislation

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**S.L. 2007-323, sec. 7.32.(f) as amended by S.L. 2008-181, Part XXXV**

**SECTION 7.32.(f) Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation. –**

- (1) There is created the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation (Commission) to be composed of 16 members, eight appointed by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and eight appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The President Pro Tempore and the Speaker shall each designate a cochair from their appointees. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made.
- (2) The cochairs shall jointly call the first meeting of the Commission. A quorum of the Commission is a majority of its members.
- (3) The Commission shall:
  - a. Evaluate initiatives and programs designed to reduce the dropout rate and increase the number of students who graduate from high school prepared to further their postsecondary education or enter the workforce.
  - b. Review the research on factors related to students' success in school.
  - c. Evaluate the grants awarded under subsection (d) of this section and recommend whether any of the programs and initiatives that received one of these grants has potential for success and should be expanded or replicated.
  - d. Study the emergence of major middle school and high school reform efforts, including Learn and Earn Programs, the New Schools Initiative, and 21st Century Schools, and the impact they may have on the dropout rate.
  - e. Examine strategies, programs, and support services that should be provided if the compulsory school attendance age is raised to enable students to graduate from high school and time lines for implementing those strategies, programs, and support services.
  - f. Following a review of the courses required for graduation and the current system of awarding credit for those courses, determine whether changes should be made that better recognize the different learning rates and other needs of students.
  - g. Determine which interventions and other strategies, such as accelerated learning, tutoring, mentoring, or small class sizes, when employed as a substitute to grade retention or as a subsequent measure to grade retention, are the most effective at enabling these students to remain in school and graduate.
  - h. Study any other issue that the Commission considers relevant and appropriate.
- (4) The Legislative Services Commission, through the Legislative Services Officer, shall assign professional and clerical staff to assist in the work of the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation. The expenses of employment of the clerical staff shall be borne by the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation.
- (5) The Commission may meet at various locations around the State in order to promote greater public participation in its deliberations. The Legislative Services Commission, through the Legislative Services Officer, shall grant to the Joint



Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation adequate meeting space in the State Legislative Building or the Legislative Office Building.

- (6) Members of the Commission shall be paid per diem, subsistence, and travel allowances as follows:
  - a. Members who are also members of the General Assembly, at the rate established in G.S. 120-3.1;
  - b. Members who are officials or employees of the State or local government agencies, at the rate established in G.S. 138-6; and
  - c. All other members, at the rate established in G.S. 138-5.
- (7) The Commission, while in the discharge of its official duties, may exercise all powers provided for under G.S. 120-19 and Article 5A of Chapter 120 of the General Statutes. The Commission may contract for professional, clerical, or consultant services as provided by G.S. 20-32.02.
- (8) The Commission shall submit an interim written report of its findings and recommendations on or before the convening of the 2009 Session of the General Assembly. The Commission may submit an interim report, including any recommendations and proposed legislation, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the General Assembly by May 1, 2010, and shall submit a final written report of its findings and recommendations on or before the convening of the 2011 Session of the General Assembly. All reports shall be filed with the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Legislative Librarian. Upon filing its final report, the Commission shall terminate.

**S.L. 2008-107, sec. 7.14.(f)**

**SECTION 7.14.(f)** Dropout Prevention Network. – In addition to its other duties, the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation, established under Section 7.32 of S.L. 2007-323, shall study the development of an effective network for the purpose of sharing best practices among the grant recipients, the public schools, and other interested organizations. The Commission shall consider interactive Web sites, electronic information sharing, professional development opportunities, conferences, and other means that it believes would be effective. The Commission may consult with the Department of Public Instruction and the Committee on Dropout Prevention. The Commission shall report its findings and any recommendations to the 2009 General Assembly.

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## COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS

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The Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation met 5 times between September 30, 2008 and January 21, 2009.

### September 30, 2008

#### **Review of the Status of Recommendations Proposed to the 2008 Regular Session**

*Sara Kamprath, Committee Staff*

#### **Status Report on the Activities of the Committee on Dropout Prevention**

*Bill Farmer, Committee Co-chair*

*Dr. David Strahan, Committee Co-chair*

### October 28, 2008

#### **Update on Raising Graduation Rates and Readiness for Career and College**

*J.B. Buxton, Deputy State Superintendent, Department of Public Instruction*

*Scott Ralls, President, North Carolina Community College System*

#### **Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce Dropout Prevention Activities**

*Rodessa Mitchell, Executive Director of Education and Workforce Development, Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce*

#### **Suspension and Expulsion Rates**

*Jamal Carr, Youth and Family Services Administrator, Department of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention*

### November 13, 2008

#### **Commission Discussion on Findings, Recommendations and Proposed Legislation in draft Interim Report to the 2009 General Assembly**

### December 2, 2008

#### **Commission Discussion and Vote on Interim Report to the 2009 General Assembly**

### January 21, 2009

#### **Commission Vote to Reconsider the Adoption of the Interim Report to the 2009 General Assembly/Discussion and Vote to Adopt Amended Interim Report to the 2009 General Assembly**

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## **SUMMARY OF STUDY COMMISSION PROCEEDINGS**

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(In addition to these summaries, the Committee Assistant maintains a notebook containing complete committee minutes for each meeting and all information presented to the committee.)

### **September 30, 2008**

Sara Kamprath, Commission Analyst, presented a status report of the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation's recommendations to the 2008 Regular Session. (See Appendix A on page 19).

Bill Farmer and Dr. David Strahan, co-chairs of the Committee on Dropout Prevention, reviewed the legislation that reestablished the Committee on Dropout Prevention until December 31, 2010. The Committee will determine which local school administrative units, schools, agencies and nonprofits shall receive grants from the \$15 million appropriated during the 2008 Regular Session. The sum of \$5.5 million shall be used to award grants to applicants that applied for a grant in 2007 but did not receive funding in 2007. The remainder of the funds shall be used to award new grants and additional grants to 2007 grant recipients. Mr. Farmer also reviewed the criteria that all grants must meet. Dr. Strahan reviewed the proposed timeline and activities for the required evaluation of the impact of the dropout prevention grants awarded in 2007.

### **October 28, 2008**

J.B. Buxton, Deputy State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Dr. Scott Ralls, President of the North Carolina Community College System, reported on the progress in developing a joint initiative to serve students who are aged 16-18 and "off-track/under credit" to graduate from high school. Work is just beginning on determining the target population to be served, the program options and design, staffing needs, budget implications, and the timeline and various options for implementation.

Rodessa Mitchell, Executive Director of Education and Workforce Development for the Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce, reported on two of the dropout prevention programs sponsored by the Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce. For 2008-2009, the Chamber has recruited 500 volunteers from 60 companies to help kindergarten students in 17 elementary schools achieve grade-level proficiency. In the Senior Academy Program, the Chamber has also recruited 26 volunteers from 16 businesses to provide one-on-one mentoring to 25 seniors at North Forsyth High School to help the students obtain a high school diploma.

Jamal Carr, Youth and Family Services Administrator for the Department of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention, reported to the Commission that suspended students are 3 times as likely to drop out as are other students. Concern has grown in the State over the rate that students are being suspended. In DPI's Annual Study of Suspensions and Expulsions: 2006-2007, 308,010 short-term out of school suspensions were given to 157,406 different students; 4,682 long-term suspensions; and 81 expulsions during the 2006-2007 school year.

Research is also beginning to show that suspension is not an effective intervention strategy for changing the inappropriate student behavior that can lead to suspension. The Center for the Prevention of School Violence has developed a Tool-Kit to provide information necessary to plan, establish, and maintain effective programs to serve as alternatives to suspension.

### **November 13, 2008**

Sara Kamprath, Commission Analyst, reviewed the proposed findings and recommendations of the draft Interim Report to the 2009 General Assembly. Based on the Commission discussion, the co-chairs directed staff to make changes to the findings and recommendations for presentation to the Commission at the next meeting.

### **December 2, 2008**

Sara Kamprath, Commission Analyst, reviewed the draft copy of the interim report. The Commission discussed the proposed findings and recommendations. The Commission moved to adopt, as amended, the Interim Report to the 2009 General Assembly.

### **January 21, 2009**

The Commission voted to reconsider the vote by which the Interim Report to the 2009 General Assembly was adopted on December 2, 2008. The Commission discussed a new finding and recommendation related to setting a short term goal for improving the 4-year cohort graduation rate and a long-term goal for achieving a ninety percent statewide 4-year cohort graduation rate by 2015. The Commission adopted the finding and recommendation for inclusion in the report. The Commission moved to adopt, as amended, the Interim Report to the 2009 General Assembly.

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## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Findings:

Based upon the various presentations and Commission discussion, the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation makes the following findings:

1. Innovative and non-traditional high school designs strengthen the retention of students in schools and reduce failure rates. North Carolina high schools that implemented reform/redesign models showed improved performance on 2007-2008 End-of-Course tests.
2. At-risk students are less likely to drop out if they form an on-going relationship with a designated adult in the schools who consistently shows concern and provides personal attention in helping at-risk students address their academic or personal problems and assists them in staying on track for graduation.
3. Current law requires children to attend school between the ages of seven and 16. In 2006-2007, students aged 17 were the most frequent dropouts. The next highest age group of dropouts was students aged 18, followed by students aged 16.
4. A student's successful transition to and positive academic progress in 9<sup>th</sup> Grade are pivotal factors in the likelihood that the student will be promoted to 10<sup>th</sup> Grade and will graduate in a timely manner.
5. In North Carolina in 2006-2007, students dropped out more frequently during 9<sup>th</sup> Grade than any other grade.
6. Student suspension rates in North Carolina have been on the rise in recent years and students who are suspended from school are three times more likely to drop out than other students.
7. The presence of the following risk factors increase a student's likelihood of failing to complete their high school education: multiple tardies, poor attendance, lack of parent involvement and support, multiple suspensions, low grades and lack of academic success, and being a pregnant or parenting teen.
8. High-quality preschool programs are important to help at-risk students enter school healthy and ready to achieve high academic performance. Reading at grade level by Grade 3 is a key predictor of high school completion and early intervention programs that promote literacy in the early elementary years are important.
9. The Commission heard from the Committee on Dropout Prevention that the availability of Dropout Prevention Grants has stimulated significant interest across the State. Hundreds of groups, including local school systems, schools, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and colleges, have proposed a variety of innovative programs and initiatives. These proposals have been designed to address unique local needs, supplement local resources, and build upon collaborative efforts in order to keep students in school and on track for high school graduation. The Commission is hopeful that the planned evaluation of the funded proposals will identify successful practices that can be sustained locally and can be replicated in other locations.

10. The Commission finds that it is premature to develop a network for sharing best practices among grant recipients, the public schools and other interested organizations. The Commission recommends such a network be developed after there is data available from the grant recipients that documents practices that have proven to be successful in reducing the dropout rate and increasing the graduation rate. The Commission also encourages the Department of Public Instruction, as a part of its technical support to grant recipients, to assist in the development of this network.
11. Graduation rates should be a key factor used in accountability systems that measure and reward a school's efforts to improve student academic performance and close achievement gaps.
12. The Commission finds that the percentage of North Carolina students who completed their high school education in four years or less in 2008 was slightly less than 70%. The Commission believes that aggressive goals which demonstrate continuous and substantial improvement from the prior year should be set to improve the current 4-year cohort graduation rate

Therefore, the Commission makes the following recommendations to the 2009 General Assembly:

1. The General Assembly shall appropriate funds for the 11 Learn and Earn early college high schools that received a planning grant in the 2008-2009 fiscal year and are ready to begin operations in the 2009-2010 school year.  
(See **LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL I**)
2. The General Assembly shall appropriate funds for Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc. to place no fewer than 100 graduation coaches in either middle or high schools and give priority to schools that have a 4-year cohort graduation rate of less than 65%.  
(See **LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL II**)
3. The General Assembly shall direct the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina, in conjunction with the Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, to direct the appropriate entity to study raising the compulsory attendance age for public school attendance prior to completion of a high school diploma from sixteen to seventeen or eighteen. At a minimum, the study shall examine other states that have raised the compulsory attendance age to determine all impacts, including the effect on the dropout rate and the fiscal impact.  
(See **LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL III**)
4. The General Assembly shall encourage local boards of education to adopt policies to encourage local businesses to adopt personnel policies to permit parents to attend student conferences, implement programs that assist students in making a successful transition between the middle school and high school years, increase parental involvement in student achievement, reduce suspension and expulsion rates and encourage academic progress during suspensions, and provide assistance and support to encourage pregnant and parenting students to graduate.  
(See **LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL IV**)

5. The General Assembly shall appropriate sufficient funds for Dropout Prevention Grants in the 2009 Session to continue some of the more successful initiatives and also to provide the opportunity for a new round of proposals to be funded.
6. The Commission strongly recommends the following:
  1. Prior to the 2009-2010 school year, the State Board of Education develop a growth model establishing annual goals for continuous and substantial improvement in the 4-year cohort graduation rate by local school administrative units.
  2. The State Board establish as a short term goal that local school administrative units meet the annual growth model goals for improvement in the 4-year cohort graduation rate beginning with the graduating class of 2010 and continuing annually thereafter.
  3. The State Board establish as a long-term goal a statewide 4-year cohort graduation rate of ninety percent by 2015.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL I

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2009

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D

BILL DRAFT 2009-TCz-3 [v.3] (11/05)

(THIS IS A DRAFT AND IS NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION)  
11/12/2008 11:40:04 AM

Short Title: Funding for Learn and Earn.

(Public)

Sponsors: .

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR ADDITIONAL LEARN AND EARN  
HIGH SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE  
JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON DROPOUT PREVENTION AND  
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the  
Department of Public Instruction the sum of three million two hundred and fifty  
thousand dollars (\$3,250,000) for the 2009-2010 fiscal year and the sum of three million  
two hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$3,250,000) for the 2010-2011 fiscal year in  
recurring funds. These funds shall be used to provide funding for the 11 additional  
Learn and Earn high schools that will be operational in 2009-2010.

**SECTION 2.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2009.



LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL II

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 2009

U

D

BILL DRAFT 2009-RJz-1 [v.1] (11/07)

(THIS IS A DRAFT AND IS NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION)

11/7/2008 11:09:26 AM

Short Title: Communities in Schools Funds.

(Public)

Sponsors: Unknown.

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA, INC., PROGRAMS AND SERVICES AND TO PLACE NO FEWER THAN ONE HUNDRED GRADUATION COACHES IN EITHER MIDDLE OR HIGH SCHOOLS, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON DROPOUT PREVENTION AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Instruction the sum of six million twenty-four thousand ninety-one dollars (\$6,024,091) for the 2009-2010 fiscal year and the sum of six million twenty-four thousand ninety-one dollars (\$6,024,091) for the 2010-2011 fiscal year in recurring funds to support and expand the programs and services of Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc., a public and private partnership that addresses the multiple needs of students at the greatest risk of dropping out of schools. Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc., shall use the funds to leverage federal and private grants to support local Communities in Schools programs throughout the State and to place no fewer than 100 graduation coaches in either middle or high schools. When placing graduation coaches, Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc., shall give priority to schools that have a four-year cohort graduation rate of less than sixty-five percent (65%).

The graduation coaches shall:

- (1) Identify and coordinate appropriate academic assistance and support for students at risk of dropping out of school;
- (2) Refer at-risk students to other school personnel such as counselors, social workers, and nurses who can address problems that might prevent a student from graduating;

## LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL II

- (3) Recruit mentors and tutors from the local community to work with at-risk students to help keep them on track to graduate;
- (4) Initiate contact with parents and guardians of at-risk students, provide regular updates of the student's academic progress, and encourage parental involvement in student academic endeavors;
- (5) Provide information to at-risk students and their parents or guardians about graduation requirements, support services to help students not performing at grade level, advanced and honors courses, opportunities for higher education, and worker training after graduation; and
- (6) Refer students requiring services relating to substance abuse, domestic violence, family planning, or mental health to appropriate providers where medically accurate information will be provided and appropriate services are available.

**SECTION 2.** Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc., shall report on the activities of the graduation coaches to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by October 15, 2010, and annually thereafter.

**SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2009.

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL III

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2009

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D

BILL DRAFT 2009-RJz-2 [v.2] (11/07)

(THIS IS A DRAFT AND IS NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION)  
12/8/2008 1:16:35 PM

Short Title: Study Raising Compulsory Attendance Age. (Public)

Sponsors: Unknown.

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO DIRECT THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION AND THE NORTH CAROLINA INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, TO DIRECT THE APPROPRIATE ENTITY TO STUDY THE IMPACTS OF RAISING THE COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AGE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PRIOR TO COMPLETION OF A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA FROM SIXTEEN TO SEVENTEEN OR EIGHTEEN, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON DROPOUT PREVENTION AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina, in coordination with the Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, shall direct the appropriate entity to study the impacts of raising the compulsory public school attendance age prior to completion of a high school diploma from 16 to 17 or 18. In its study, the Board of Governors shall consider all of the following:

- (1) What impacts, including fiscal impacts, has raising the compulsory school attendance age had in states which have raised the compulsory school attendance age in the last 15 years.
- (2) What conclusions can be drawn as to the impact the compulsory school attendance age has made in the dropout and high school completion rates for states who require compulsory school attendance to ages 16, 17, and 18, respectively.
- (3) What best practices for working with at-risk populations of students who remain in school have been employed in states that have raised the compulsory attendance age in the last 15 years.

### LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL III

- 1           (4)    What would be the fiscal impact in raising the compulsory school  
2                   attendance age from 16 to 17 and 16 to 18, respectively, for each local  
3                   administrative school unit in North Carolina.

4           **SECTION 2.** No later than April 15, 2009, the Board of Governors of The  
5   University of North Carolina shall submit a report of its study to the Joint Legislative  
6   Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint  
7   Legislative Education Oversight Committee, including its findings and  
8   recommendations.

9           **SECTION 3.** This act is effective when it becomes law.  
10

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL IV

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 2009

U

D

BILL DRAFT 2009-RJz-3 [v.7] (11/25)

(THIS IS A DRAFT AND IS NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION)

12/8/2008 11:32:30 AM

Short Title: Encourage Policies to Facilitate Graduation.

(Public)

Sponsors: Unknown.

Referred to:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO ENCOURAGE LOCAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION TO ADOPT POLICIES TO ENCOURAGE LOCAL BUSINESSES TO ADOPT PERSONNEL POLICIES TO PERMIT PARENTS TO ATTEND STUDENT CONFERENCES, IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS THAT ASSIST STUDENTS IN MAKING A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION BETWEEN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL YEARS, INCREASE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, REDUCE SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION RATES AND ENCOURAGE ACADEMIC PROGRESS DURING SUSPENSIONS, AND PROVIDE ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT TO ENCOURAGE PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENTS TO GRADUATE, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON DROPOUT PREVENTION AND HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** G.S. 115C-47(34) is amended to read:

"(34) To Encourage the Business Community to Facilitate Student Achievement. – Local boards of education, in consultation with local business leaders, shall develop voluntary guidelines relating to after-school employment. The guidelines may include an agreement to limit the number of hours a student may work or to tie the number of hours a student may work to his academic performance, school attendance, and economic need. The General Assembly finds that local boards of education do not currently have information regarding how many of their students are employed after school and how many hours they work; the General Assembly urges local boards of education to compile this critical information so that the State can determine to what extent these students' work affects their school performance.

## LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL IV

1           Local boards of education shall work with local business leaders,  
2           including local chambers of commerce, to encourage employers to  
3           include and adopt as part of their stated personnel policies time for  
4           employees who are parents or guardians to attend conferences with  
5           their children's teachers.

6           The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall provide guidance  
7           and technical assistance to the local boards of education on carrying out the provisions  
8           of this subdivision."

9           **SECTION 2.** G.S. 115C-47 is amended by adding the following new  
10          subdivisions to read:

11          "(53) To Encourage Programs for Successful Transition Between the Middle  
12          School and High School Years. – Local boards of education are  
13          encouraged to adopt policies to implement programs that assist  
14          students in making a successful transition between the middle school  
15          and high school years. The programs may include Ninth Grade  
16          Academies, programs to effectively prepare 8<sup>th</sup> Grade students for the  
17          expectations and rigors of high school, early warning systems to flag  
18          students not ready for 9<sup>th</sup> Grade and develop plans for those students,  
19          mentoring programs that pair upperclassmen with incoming students;  
20          and graduation plans for students who have fallen behind and are off-  
21          track for graduation.

22          (54) To Increase Parental Involvement in Student Achievement and  
23          Graduation Preparation. – Local boards of education are encouraged to  
24          adopt policies to promote and support parental involvement in student  
25          learning and achievement at school and at home and to encourage  
26          successful progress towards graduation. These policies may include  
27          strategies to increase school communications with parents regarding  
28          expectations for students, graduation requirements, and available  
29          course offerings, to provide increased opportunities for parental  
30          involvement in schools, and to create an environment in the schools  
31          conducive for parental involvement.

32          (55) To Reduce Suspension and Expulsion Rates and Provide for Academic  
33          Progress During Suspensions. – Local boards of education are  
34          encouraged to adopt policies and best practices to reduce short and  
35          long-term suspension and expulsion rates and to provide alternative  
36          learning programs for continued academic progress for students who  
37          are short and long-term suspended."

38          **SECTION 3.** G.S. 115C-375.5(b) is amended to read:

39          "(b) Local boards of education shall adopt a policy to ensure that pregnant and  
40          parenting students are not discriminated against or excluded from school or any  
41          program, class, or extracurricular activity because they are pregnant or parenting  
42          students, and to provide assistance and support to encourage pregnant and parenting  
43          students to remain enrolled in school and graduate. The policy shall include, at a  
44          minimum, all of the following:

## LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL IV

- (1) Local school administrative units shall use, as needed, supplemental funds from the At-Risk Student Services allotment to support programs for pregnant and parenting students.
- (2) Notwithstanding Part 1 of Article 26 of this Chapter, pregnant and parenting students shall be given excused absences from school for pregnancy and related conditions for the length of time the student's physician finds medically necessary. This includes absences due to the illness or medical appointment during school hours of a child of whom the student is the custodial parent.
- (3) Homework and make-up work shall be made available to pregnant and parenting students to ensure that they have the opportunity to keep current with assignments and avoid losing course credit because of their absence from school and, to the extent necessary, a homebound teacher shall be assigned."

**SECTION 4.** This act is effective when it becomes law.

## APPENDIX A

### Update on the Status of the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation Recommendations to the 2008 Regular Session

Recommendation	Outcome
<p><b>Recommendation 1: Plan for Providing Education and Workforce Skills Development</b></p> <p>The Commission strongly encourages the State Board of Community Colleges and the State Board of Education to develop a rigorous academic and workplace skills development program for high school dropouts between the ages of sixteen and eighteen who are enrolled at a community college. The State Board of Community Colleges, in collaboration with the State Board of Education, shall report on the components of the program and a timeline for implementation of the program to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee before the convening of the 2009 Session of the General Assembly.</p>	<p>The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the Community College System Office (CCSO) report that they are in discussions with the national organization, Jobs For the Future, to explore an alternative learning program for students who are ages 16 - 17 and need significant credit and a different pathway to high school graduation. These students are generally over-age and under-credited. The model will involve a heavy emphasis on career readiness and involve apprenticeship programs. DPI and NCCCS would like to have a proposal ready for their respective boards and the 2009 General Assembly.</p>

Prepared by:  
Sara Kamprath  
Research Division, NCGA  
9/30/08



Recommendation	Outcome
<p><b>Recommendation 2: Early Intervention Programs</b></p> <p>The Commission strongly recommends that the General Assembly continue to fund More at Four and Smart Start early intervention programs for at-risk students, and to expand these programs.</p>	<p>The General Assembly appropriated \$30,000,000 in recurring funds for FY 08-09 for expansion of the More at Four program and \$500,000 in recurring funds for FY 08-09 for local Smart Start initiatives.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3: High School Redesign</b></p> <p>a. The Commission encourages local boards of education to consider innovative and non-traditional high school designs to meet the needs of all students, especially ninth graders.</p> <p>b. The Commission strongly urges that serious consideration be given to Ninth Grade Academies, smaller school settings such as schools within a school, themed academies, and flexible school schedules such as evening academies.</p>	<p>a. DPI reports that achievement results from the State's turnaround initiative indicated that most of the high schools that have implemented reform/redesign models have shown improved performance in EOC tests in 2007-08. Many of these schools showed up to ten percentage point gains in overall performance composites.</p> <p>In addition, the State is now home to over 40 redesigned high schools through work with the NC New Schools Project and 60 Learn and Earn early college high schools. In addition, 13 more Learn and Earn sites are in planning and will open in the fall of 2009, if given funding by the 2009 General Assembly.</p> <p>b. In August, DPI research interns under the leadership of Associate Superintendent Philip Price conducted a study of ninth grade academies. North Carolina has 134 ninth grade academies in 63 counties. Research findings indicated that the academies were successful in reducing the non-promotion rates and dropout rates for their students. The academies' support strategies were helpful for both teachers and students.</p>

Recommendation	Outcome
<p><b>Recommendation 4: Parental Involvement and Communication Between Schools and Parents</b></p> <p>a. The Commission encourages principals, teachers, and organizations that promote parent, family and community involvement in the education of all children to develop methods to reach out to parents and guardians to involve them in student learning at home and at school.</p> <p>b. The Commission also strongly encourages local Chamber of Commerce education committees to develop and promote programs to encourage local employers to invest in local community school systems by providing flexibility to employees for involvement in school activities and volunteer efforts without penalty, and by engaging in cooperative efforts with schools to promote parental involvement in education.</p>	<p>a. DPI reports there has been considerable work in this area, from the Division of Communications under the Deputy Superintendent (development of a parent involvement booklet is currently underway), from State Board of Education's community outreach officer, from Title I schools, and from Statewide comprehensive support. Initiatives in high need districts and schools include a partnership with the UNC School of Social Work that has provided a unique tool (School Success Profile (SSP) and Elementary School Success Profile (ESSP)) for schools and communities to screen for school success and develop profiles and risk reports. Components include assessments of the neighborhoods; school; friends; families; health and well-being, and social behavior at home and school.</p> <p>State Superintendent June Atkinson's Parent Advisory Group provides ongoing input and guidance to efforts to engage parents in North Carolina public schools.</p> <p>b. The North Carolina Chamber of Commerce reports that the 66<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, held on March 26, 2008 in Greensboro, featured a preliminary Special Session on the significance and challenges of the State's dropout rate. The purpose of the session was to raise awareness about the issue at the State Chamber's largest annual event, and offer useful information and tools for businesses and others in attendance to empower them to get involved to help increase North Carolina's graduation rate. Nearly 400 leaders in business, education, government and non-profits attended the event.</p>

Recommendation	Outcome
<p><b>Recommendation 4. continued</b></p> <p>c. The Commission also encourages local media to expand reporting on achievements and accomplishments within local community school systems and on the positive involvement of parents within those systems.</p> <p>d. The Commission recommends that the General Assembly enact legislation to appropriate funds for Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc. to place no fewer than 100 graduation coaches in either middle or high schools. When placing the graduation coaches, Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc. shall give priority to schools that have a 4-year cohort graduation rate of less than 65%.</p>	<p>c. No information is available.</p> <p>d. In response to this recommendation, HB 2277 was introduced and referred to the House Appropriations Committee. The bill would appropriate funds for 100 graduation coaches in selected high schools.</p> <p>HB 2089 was also introduced and included a study of graduation coaches by the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. This bill was also referred to the Appropriations committee.</p> <p>Neither bill was enacted.</p>

Recommendation	Outcome
<p><b>Recommendation 5: School Climate and School Safety</b></p> <p>a. The Commission encourages superintendents, principals, and teachers to ensure that the climate of their schools is welcoming to all students and provides a safe learning environment. The Commission also encourages the enforcement of local board policies and procedures to prevent acts of harassment, bullying, or discrimination.</p> <p>b. The Commission strongly recommends that the Office of Professional Development, under the State Board of Education, promote professional development that helps superintendents, principals, and teachers make learning more relevant for culturally diverse populations and for local boards of education to encourage superintendents, principals, and teachers to seek out this professional development.</p>	<p>a. DPI reports that a partnership with the UNC School of Social Work has been created to provide School Success Profile (SSP) and Elementary School Success Profile (ESSP) in high need communities. The SSP and ESSP feature dimensions that focus on neighborhood safety, positive behaviors for teens, using good social skills, and peaceful interaction. Twenty-first century community learning centers receive grants to serve students in high-poverty and low-performing schools. These four-year grants create community learning centers that provide academic support to students at risk.</p> <p>b. The Office of Professional Development (in the Division of Talent Management and Development) has delivered training on principal executive standards throughout the State during the summer and fall of 2007. Among these standards is: Cultural leadership which "visibly supports the positive, culturally-responsive traditions of the school community." In addition, the Raising Achievement and Closing the Gaps staff has joined the District and School Transformation division; from that locus they will continue to offer workshops and assessments related to cultural competency.</p>

Recommendation	Outcome
<p><b>Recommendation 6: Rigorous Academic Courses and Less Remediation</b></p> <p>The Commission strongly encourages schools to promote high expectations and offer rigorous instruction and support for students identified as not being prepared for coursework at the next grade level.</p> <p>The Commission also encourages high schools to offer all students a rigorous academic core of courses and access to academically challenging courses such as Advanced Placement and Honors classes.</p>	<p>DPI reports that in 2009-10, the "future-ready core" of courses will become the default course of study for all high school freshmen in North Carolina. The current year is a year of planning and implementation to ensure that students, parents, and schools understand the need for all students to access a rigorous, challenging course of study. In addition, the rollout of the comprehensive support to districts and schools across the State means that there are district and school transformation coaches who are first in line to assist struggling performers and trouble-shoot in areas where weaknesses become evident. Extensive needs assessment training enable instructional facilitators, Title I specialists, and other departmental staff to conduct thorough and thoughtful assessments of schools and districts that are chronically low-performing.</p>

Recommendation	Outcome
<p><b>Recommendation 7: Career and Technical Education (CTE) Courses</b></p> <p>a. The Commission recommends that schools should enhance their Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses in middle school and high school for all students.</p> <p>The Commission strongly encourages schools to offer high-quality CTE courses in high-demand, high-skill, and high-wage fields.</p>	<p>a. DPI reports that the new federal law (Carl D Perkins CTE Act of 2006), requires the development of challenging academic and technical standards to assist students in preparation for high-wage, high-skill or high-demand occupations. Enhancements of CTE courses at middle school and high school include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Aligning curriculum with national skills standards, national curriculum standards, and industry standards where appropriate</li> <li>⇒ Developing state supported curriculum that meets the needs of business and industry and available online</li> <li>⇒ Using State and local labor market data to help make program offering decisions</li> <li>⇒ Implementing CTE programs within the secondary schools to provide an industry-recognized and issued certificate of skill attainment</li> <li>⇒ Assisting all LEAs in implementing a career development program for students focused on high-demand, high-skill, and high-wage occupations. The Local Plan documents assurance that this service will be provided</li> </ul> <p>Providing direction to assist students to engage in work-based learning such as apprenticeships and internships. State guide is available online to help school systems. State development is available yearly. The Department of Labor and DPI work to identify and facilitate opportunities.</p>

Recommendation	Outcome
<p><b>Recommendation 7. continued</b></p> <p>b. The Commission also strongly encourages schools to ensure equal access for girls in rigorous training for high-skill, high-wage jobs in high-need professions and to encourage girls to pursue nontraditional female jobs.</p>	<p>b. DPI CTE is ensuring equal access for females in training for high-need areas and in jobs that are not traditionally female and has included two nontraditional core indicators in its eight core indicators of student achievement. These nontraditional core indicators are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Student participation in courses leading to nontraditional occupations</li> <li>2. Student completion in courses leading to nontraditional occupations.</li> </ol> <p>As part of the CTE Local Plan, LEAs are to develop strategies that increase female participation and completion of courses leading to nontraditional occupations /careers.</p> <p>Further, as a component of DPI's responsibilities to the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, DPI CTE ensures equal access.</p>

Recommendation	Outcome
<p><b>Recommendation 8. Impact of Raising the Compulsory Attendance Age</b></p> <p>The Commission recommended that the General Assembly direct the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina to study raising the compulsory attendance age for public school attendance from sixteen to seventeen or eighteen. The study should examine other states that have raised the compulsory attendance age to determine all impacts, including the effect on the dropout rate and the fiscal impact. The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina shall report to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by November 15, 2008.</p>	<p>In response to this recommendation, HB 2289 and SB 1812 were introduced and language was incorporated into the 2008 Studies bill. S.L. 2008-181, Sec. 5.4 allows the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (Committee), in coordination with the Department of Public Instruction, to study the impacts of raising the compulsory public school attendance age from 16 to 17 or 18. The Committee must consider all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ Impacts that raising the compulsory school attendance age has had in states that have raised the age in the last 15 years.</li> <li>⇒ Conclusions that can be drawn as to the impact the compulsory school attendance age has made in the dropout and high school completion rates for states who require compulsory school attendance to ages 16, 17, and 18, respectively.</li> <li>⇒ Best practices for working with at-risk students who remain in school that have been employed in states that have raised the compulsory attendance age in the last 15 years.</li> <li>⇒ The fiscal impact of raising the compulsory school attendance age from 16 to 17 and 16 to 18, respectively, for each local school administrative unit in North Carolina.</li> </ul> <p>The Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee has taken no action on this issue.</p>



Recommendation	Outcome
<p><b>Recommendation 9. Differences in Risk Factors that Lead to Males and Females Dropping Out</b></p> <p>The Commission encouraged the UNC Board of Governors to conduct research to determine if there are gender-based differences in the factors which cause males and females to drop out of school, and if there are gender-based intervention strategies to prevent males and females from dropping out of school.</p>	<p>No information is available for this recommendation.</p>

Recommendation	Outcome
<p>10: Dropout Prevention Grants</p> <p><b>a. The Commission strongly recommends that the General Assembly enact legislation to appropriate funds for additional dropout prevention grants, to reestablish the Committee on Dropout Prevention to evaluate the impact of the dropout prevention grants, and to appropriate funds for an independent consultant to staff the Committee and provide technical assistance to the grant recipients. The Committee shall report the results of its evaluations to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.</b></p>	<p>a. In response to this recommendation, HB 2418 and SB 1752 were introduced and referred to the Appropriations Committees. These bills would provide \$5.5 million for FY 08-09 to fund an additional 40 grants to applicants that did not previously receive funding, reestablish the Committee on Dropout Prevention to evaluate the impact of the dropout prevention grants, and to appropriate funds for an independent consultant to staff the Committee and provide technical assistance to the grant recipients, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the grants. These bills were not enacted in their original form but provisions were included as a part of the 2008 budget bill.</p>
	<p>S.L. 2008-107, Sec. 7.14 and 7.14A and S.L. 2008-181, Part XXXV addressed changes to the dropout prevention grants, the Committee on Dropout Prevention and the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation. Fifteen million dollars was appropriated in the following manner: \$5.5 million for applicants who were not previously funded and \$9.5 million to award new grants or provide additional funds to previous grantees. The Committee on Dropout Prevention (Committee) was reestablished to determine which local school administrative units, schools, agencies, and nonprofits will receive dropout prevention grants provided by those sections, the amount of each grant, and eligible uses of the grant funding. The Committee will continue to be located administratively in the Department of Public Instruction</p>

Recommendation	Outcome
	<p>(DPI) but will exercise its powers and duties independently of DPI. DPI must provide for the administrative costs of the Committee and provide technical assistance to the grant recipients.</p> <p>The Committee must evaluate the impact of the grants awarded under S.L. 2007-323 and new grants awarded under S.L. 2008-107, using information reported by the grantees, and must make an interim report of the evaluations of the grants awarded under S.L. 2007-323 by March 31, 2009 and a final report by November 15, 2009 to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. The Committee must make an interim report of the evaluations of the grants awarded under this section by March 31, 2010 and a final report by November 15, 2010 to the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. The Committee may contract with an independent consultant to assist in grant evaluation.</p> <p>The Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation was directed to study the development of an effective network to share best practices.</p>
<p>b. The Commission also strongly recommends that the Joint Legislative Commission on Dropout Prevention and High School Graduation should be continued to monitor both existing and future grants.</p>	<p>b. In response to this recommendation, HB 2288 and SB 1806 were introduced and incorporated into the 2008 Studies bill. The Commission was extended to the filing of its final report or the convening of the 2011 Session of the General Assembly, whichever is later.</p>